

Information / Comments

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In partnership with the following groups:

Maryland Department of the Environment

<http://www.mde.state.md.us>

Maryland Department of Natural Resources

<http://www.dnr.state.md.us>

U.S. Environmental Protection Agency

<http://www.epa.gov>

Chesapeake Bay Program Office

<http://chesapeakebay.net>



David R. Craig, Harford County Executive
Preserving Harford's past; promoting Harford's future



HARFORD COUNTY, MARYLAND

DEER CREEK WATERSHED RESTORATION ACTION STRATEGY (WRAS)

The Deer Creek Watershed Restoration Action Strategy (WRAS) was initiated in 2005 to protect and restore habitat and water quality in the Deer Creek watershed. Harford County has collected all available natural resource data in the Deer Creek watershed to better understand the existing conditions and stressors that are impacting water quality and habitat. We will incorporate local knowledge and public input with the data. Restoration and protection strategies will be developed to protect and maintain the high quality areas, and restore areas that are found to be impaired.

There are several technical reports prepared by the State that provide the foundation for the development of the WRAS. These include:

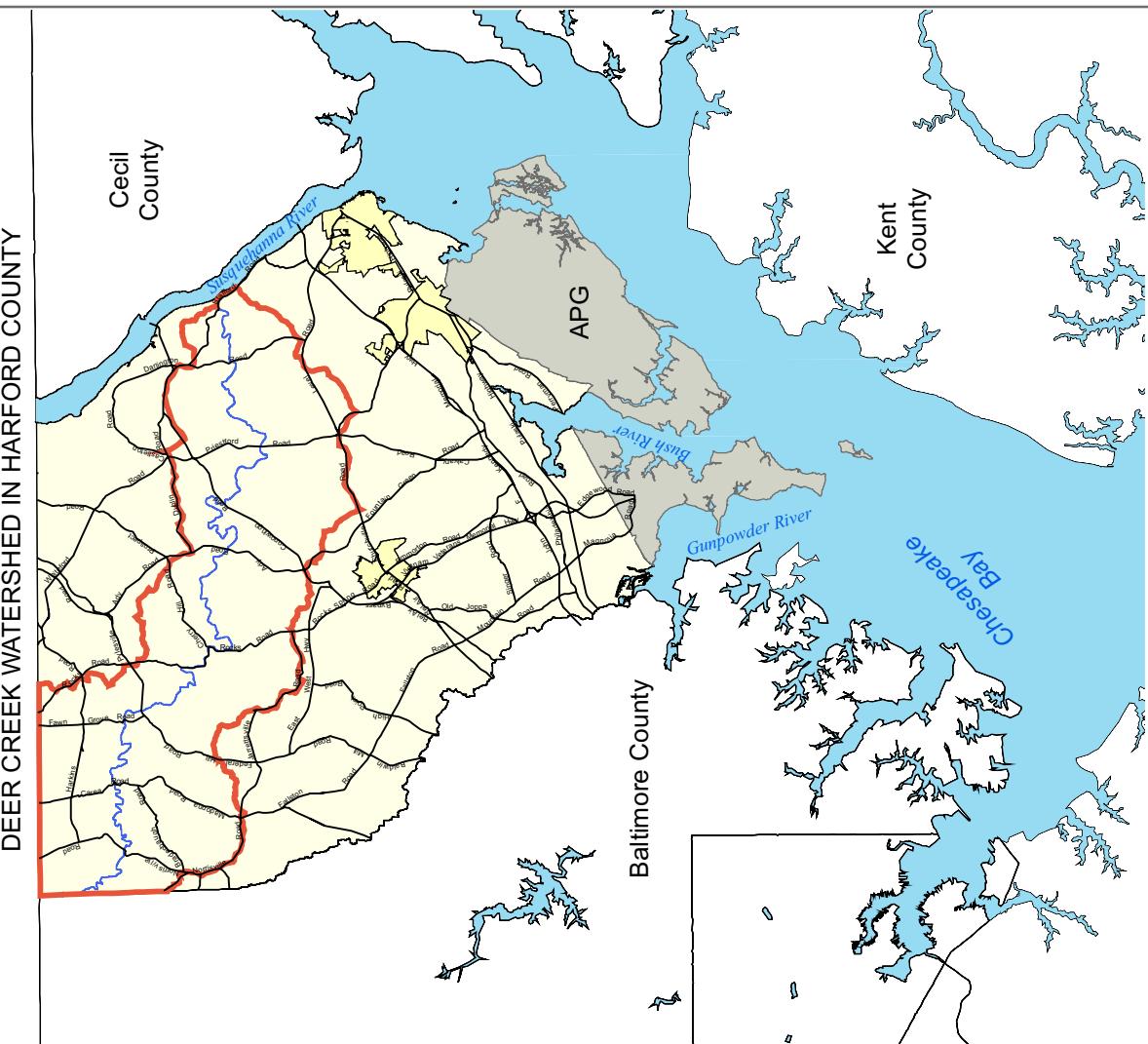
- Characterization of the watershed - provides the background information such as demographics, land use / land cover, forest resources, easements and sensitive species.
- Synoptic Survey - provides a snapshot overview of the basic water chemistry of the streams in the watershed (104 sites sampled in April 2005) such as nitrate/nitrite, orthophosphate, temperature, dissolved oxygen, pH, and conductivity.

-Stream Corridor Assessment - 75 miles of stream were walked in the watershed; potential environmental problems such as erosion sites, inadequate stream buffers, fish barriers, pipe outfalls, channel alterations, and trash dumping areas were identified and mapped.

-Maryland Biological Stream Survey - sampled aquatic life in the sub-watersheds of Deer Creek to identify and prioritize areas most critical to maintain aquatic biodiversity through either restoration or preservation activities.

A Deer Creek Stakeholder Committee was formed early in the process to assist the County in formulating the plan. Members on the Committee include interests from the agricultural, environmental, educational, and business communities. The Committee, along with public input, will guide future implementation strategies in the plan.

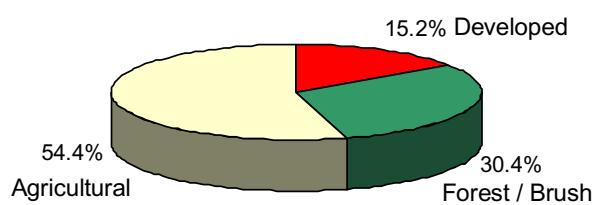
DRAFT WRAS will be available for public review and comment in November 2006. A FINAL plan will be completed by January 2007. All technical reports and information on the WRAS will be available through the County's webpage <http://www.harfordcountymd.gov>.



BACKGROUND / GENERAL INFORMATION

Deer Creek is the largest watershed in Harford County, covering 38 percent of the County's land area. The entire watershed is approximately 109,350 acres, of which, 85,938 acres are within Harford County. The remainder of the watershed is in York County, PA (16,250 acres) and Baltimore County (7,150 acres).

Land Use in Deer Creek Watershed (MD & PA)



There are currently 8,810 households and 24,750 persons residing in the Deer Creek Watershed in Harford County; this represents 10.5 percent of the County's population.

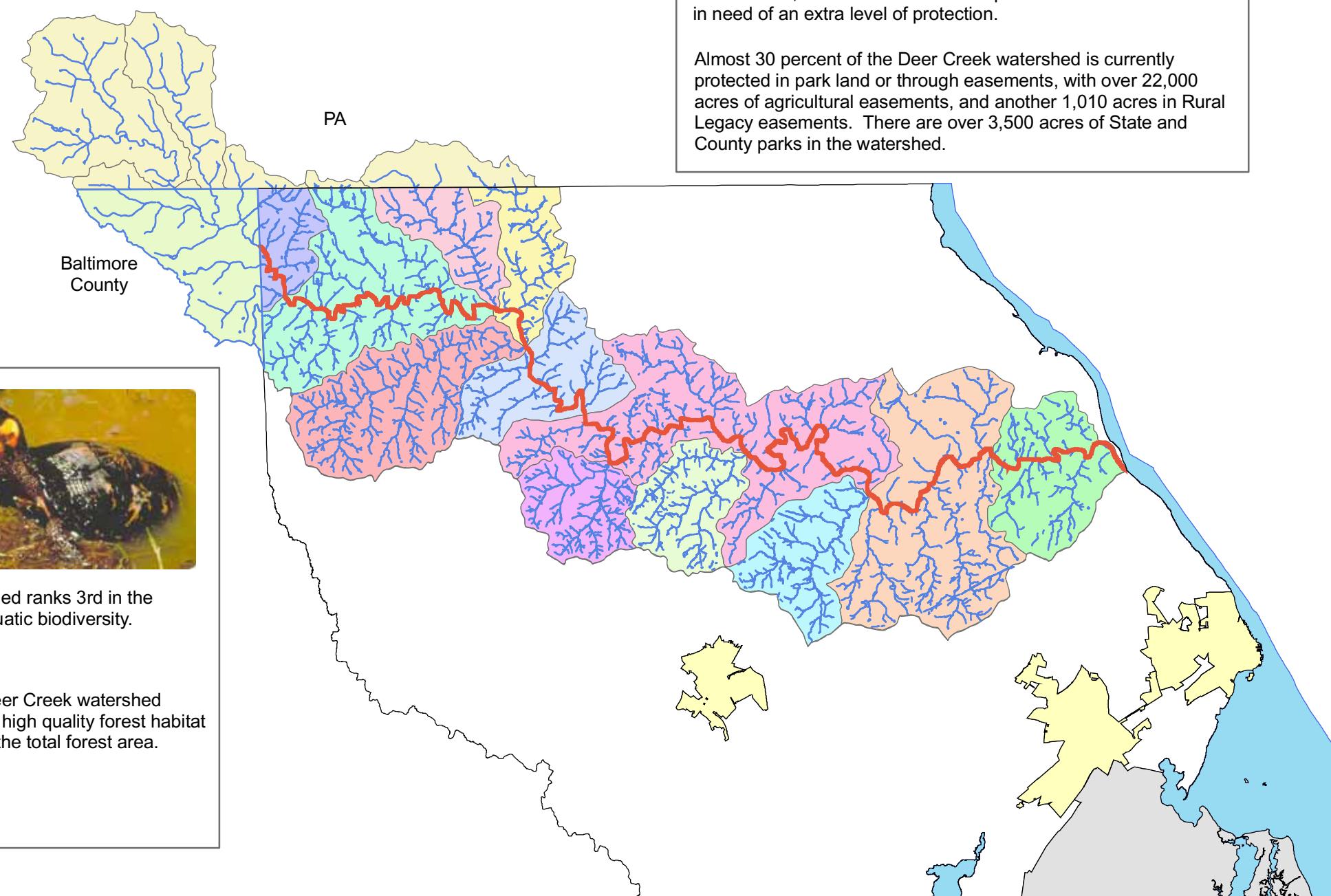


A watershed is a region or area of land that drains to a body of water. The boundary of a watershed is determined by the hills and valleys of the landscape. Every piece of land is part of a watershed.

PRESERVATION

Deer Creek Watershed is identified in Maryland's Clean Water Action Plan (1998) as a Category 1 watershed indicating that it is in need of restoration. It is also a Category 3 watershed indicating that it is a pristine or sensitive watershed in need of protection. These watersheds show signs of stress or degradation but still contain pristine or sensitive natural resources. Deer Creek has the added distinction of being designated a "Select" Category 3 watershed, which indicates a more pristine or sensitive watershed in need of an extra level of protection.

Almost 30 percent of the Deer Creek watershed is currently protected in park land or through easements, with over 22,000 acres of agricultural easements, and another 1,010 acres in Rural Legacy easements. There are over 3,500 acres of State and County parks in the watershed.



ECOLOGICAL SIGNIFICANCE



The Deer Creek watershed is a recognized local and State resource worthy of protection. Its many significant attributes resulted in its designation as a State Scenic River in 1973. Numerous sensitive species inhabit this watershed, including the endangered Maryland Darter, the bog turtle, and brook trout. Many of the streams are designated trout waters.



The Deer Creek Watershed ranks 3rd in the State of Maryland for aquatic biodiversity.

Maryland's part of the Deer Creek watershed contains 12,099 acres of high quality forest habitat which makes up 41% of the total forest area.